

SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

Annual Report 2009 / 10



About SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) ...

SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) is the only artist-run centre in Canada dedicated to the development and presentation of contemporary visual art by South Asian artists. Our mission is to produce innovative programs that critically explore issues and ideas shaping South Asian identities and experiences. We encourage work that is challenging, experimental and engaged in critical discussions of visual forms and processes, and which offer new perspectives on the contemporary world.

SAVAC develops and produces exhibitions, and a range of contemporary visual art interventions and programs. SAVAC works without a gallery space, and typically in collaboration with other artist-run centres, public galleries, and visual arts and educational organizations. This collaborative process of working allows us to foster important ties with the mainstream art community, encouraging an exchange of ideas and perspectives, and increasing our organizational reach and visibility.

SAVAC's programming is national in scope, but we are actively engaged with regional and international discussions informing the development of contemporary South Asian Art. SAVAC plays a vital role in the visual arts sector in Canada by advocating for South Asian artists and culturally diverse issues and practices.

SAVAC receives operating funding from all levels of government: The Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council. SAVAC gratefully acknowledges the support of these funding agencies. SAVAC flourishes because of the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of its members and volunteers.



Canada Council
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Report from the Chair of the Board of Directors ...

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the SAVAC Board of Directors, to provide a brief overview of Board activities in 2010.

At the last AGM, Oliver Husain, Tavinder Channa, and Ananya Ohri were elected to the Board of Directors. The positions of Co-chairs were also consolidated to form the role of Chair.

This past year, SAVAC's Board of Directors and staff consulted the membership and community as part of the strategic planning process begun in 2009. With the assistance of consultant Judy Wolfe, the Board finalized SAVAC's 2011 – 2014 Strategic Plan, which will be tabled for approval during the 2011 AGM.

Later this spring the SAVAC Board of Directors will be meeting with major private and corporate funders at a reception being co-hosted by SAVAC and the AGO on the occasion of the closure of the exhibitions *Maharaja: the Splendour of India's Royal Courts*, and *The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (Maharaja and —)*. It is hoped that new relationships will be formed during this event, with the goal of raising funds to maintain the level of programming and staffing with the transition out of Ontario Trillium Foundation funding.

2010 was a remarkable and productive year for SAVAC. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the SAVAC team and my fellow board colleagues, without whom we wouldn't have achieved such success. Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our members for their support and participation in 2010.

Fayiaz Chunara
Chairman, Board of Directors
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

Report from the Executive Director ...

2009/10 was a year of remarkable accomplishments for SAVAC in working towards our mission to raise the profile of South Asian artists in Canada.

We were very excited to work with a range of programming partners over this past year, including Nuit Blanche, City of Toronto; Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant; NFB Mediatheque; the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum; the 23rd Images Festival; UTS Gallery, Sydney with the support of the Canadian Consulate General, Sydney, Australia; and Function13 Gallery.

SAVAC actively contributes to a range of discussions on cultural diversity in the visual arts. In our 2009/10 year this has included presentations at: the University of Waterloo, Fine Arts Department's Visiting Speakers Series; *Extra-Curricular: Between Art and Pedagogy* symposium at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery; Access Alliance Youth Video Workshop at VTape; a presentation on *Big Stories, Little India* at the South Asian Community Symposium organized by the Toronto District School Board; a presentation on *Tapestry* at the Asian Heritage Month Symposium at OISE, University of Toronto; *From the Ground Up: A Biennial Platform for International Contemporary Art in Toronto*, a forum organized by MOCCA (Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art) and the Power Plant

From May to November, I was involved in the development of the exhibition, *Maharaja: the Splendour of India's Royal Courts* at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO). This has resulted in generating new awareness of SAVAC, and has also led to important new introductions for SAVAC in the business community. The potential of these introductions via the AGO has significance as we anticipate our 2010/2011 fiscal year to be a period of considerable change as SAVAC transitions out of Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) funding. The move out of OTF funding represents a halving of our budgets, and a major reduction of resources. We therefore look forward to the support of our community to help SAVAC maintain its high quality of programming and service to members.

In 2010, we were honored and gratified by the accolades from our peers in the Toronto art community. SAVAC's major project *دل که سوز ندارد، دل نیست* (*the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart*) by Jayce Salloum and Khadim Ali was awarded the Images Prize for Best Canadian Media Artwork at the 23rd Images Festival (April, 2010). The project will continue to tour in Canada throughout 2011. In September 2010, Jon Soske and Tejpal Aiji received an Ontario Association of Art Galleries (OAAG) award for curatorial writing for the exhibition *South-South: Interruptions and Encounters*, which took place at the Justina Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto, 2009.

This year SAVAC established a very important working relationship with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to develop curriculum content related to SAVAC's *Monitor* film and video program. This represents a vital partnership and an important opportunity to outreach to schools and youth with culturally diverse curriculum content. Congratulations to member artist Sharlene Bamboat whose film *Tapestry* will be included in the TDSB's Asian Heritage curriculum program. Thank you to Allan Tong who worked with extraordinary persistence to develop this relationship with the TDSB.

Report from the Executive Director (cont'd ...)

Over the summer, SAVAC launched its new website (www.savac.net) which provides a great deal of content on SAVAC programming, extensive archives, latest news and a portal for donations. Thank you to developer Sidrah Laldin, designer Fathima Cader (likethewind designs) and Kohila Kurunathan for undertaking this major project. We welcome your feedback on website content and design.

Organizationally, SAVAC was awarded Charitable Status in December 2009, and I would like to encourage members to donate to support SAVAC's work in promoting South Asian artists. You can register your support by clicking on the Canada Helps button on our website, or by visiting www.canadahelps.org.

Finally, thank you to everyone who worked so hard to help us achieve our success this past year. I'd especially like to express my thanks to SAVAC's Board of Directors who have shown exceptional leadership and worked tirelessly this year to support the work that we do.

Thank you also to our dedicated staff for their commitment and energy, especially through the period of my secondment to the AGO: Srimoyee Mitra, our Programming Co-ordinator; Kohila Kurunathan, our Communications and Outreach Officer; Allan Tong, Educator; Niwah Visser, who assisted us on a short development contract; and Ghufuran Sallay, our bookkeeper. Many thanks also to our volunteers for their time and efforts: Angela Britto, Roy Caussy, Mary Chauvin, Singithi Kandage, Nitisha Mehta, Tharmila Rajasingham, Gurpreet Sehra, Uda Serasinghe, Ambereen Siddiqui, Tomasz Smereka and Ananthan Sinnadurai.

Thanks to all our members for their contributions in the past year. We look forward to staying in touch during the upcoming year, and welcome your suggestions, contributions and feedback.

Haema Sivanesan
Executive Director
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

Programming report — artistic programming ...

2009/10 has been an exciting year of programs for SAVAC. We built significant partnerships with prestigious institutions that increased the visibility and profile of our organization. We succeeded in accessing broader audiences locally, regionally and nationally, and engaged different communities outside our regular audience base. As we steadily increase the profile of our programs we stay committed to our mandate to promote, produce and develop innovative and critical art practices by South Asian artists in our membership and beyond.

Here are some highlights from last year's artistic programs:

Ghost Stories

3 October, 2009

SAVAC was an Independent Project partner with Scotiabank Nuit Blanche 2009. We presented a series of resonant performances that explored the relationship between the migrant body and cultural memory and consciousness. Artists Simla Civelak (Toronto, Canada), Leila Gajusingh (Toronto, Canada), Mehr Javed (Lahore, Pakistan), Nahed Mansour (Montreal, Canada), Ashok Mathur and Nilan Perera (Vancouver and Toronto) and Meena Murugesan (Montreal, Canada), transformed the everyday functional spaces of the 401 Richmond building with their transient and compelling performances.

Crossing Lines: An Intercultural Dialogue

29 November, 2009 — 22 January, 2010

Co-presented with the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant, Brantford, Ontario, this exhibition brought together artists from different parts of Canada to examine issues of connections and disconnections, sites of intersection and divergence that exist between South Asian and Indigenous communities. Together they explored the possibility of dialogues by engaging in ideas of loss and displacement. Artists included Bonnie Devine (Toronto), Roy Caussy (Vancouver/Hamilton), Ali Kazimi (Toronto), Afshin Matlabi (Montreal), Yudi Sewraj (Montreal), Greg Staats (Toronto), Jeff Thomas (Ottawa) and Ehren Bear Witness Thomas (Ottawa).

Programming report — artistic programming (cont'd ...)

Soheila Tavallei

7—30 January, 2010

SAVAC presented a new series of ink drawings by member artist Soheila Tavallaei as part of our annual member solo program. This program is part of a developing initiative to support the development of new work by an artist from SAVAC's membership. Tavallaei's drawings explored ideas of censorship and entrapment, and courage and defiance, as she drew inspiration from the fiery protests and movements of dissent that have taken place in different parts of the world.

MONITOR 6: New South Asian Short Film & Video

24 April, 2010 at the NFB, Toronto

Programmed by Richard Fung, SAVAC's annual experimental short film and video screening program brought together new works by 10 artists from Bangladesh, Canada, India, Nepal, Pakistan, UK and USA. *Monitor 6* was sold out and was invited for screening in different parts of the country.

دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart)

3 April – 2 May, 2010

Co-presented with the Institute of Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum and The Images Festival, this exhibition was a collaboration between Afghan artist Khadim Ali and Vancouver-based Jayce Salloum in 2008. The artist team traveled to the Bamiyan valley in Afghanistan where the c. 5th century Buddhas were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001. Culminating in compelling photographs, videos as well as miniature paintings, the exhibition won the Images Prize for the Best Canadian Media Artwork at the 23rd Annual Images Festival Awards. Since, the exhibition has been touring nationally and internationally.



Ghost Stories for Nuit Blanche 2009 (l-r) Nahed Mansour, *Halq* • Leila Gajusingh, *Batted Annotations*



Opening reception for *Crossing Lines: An Intercultural Dialogue* at the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant. (l-r) Bonnie Devine, *New Earth Braid* • Jeff Thomas & Ali Kazimi, *Shooting Indians*



Opening reception for new drawings by Soheila Tavalei, SAVAC member's solo exhibition



MONITOR 6: New South Asian Short Film & Video at the NFB • Programmer Richard Fung and artists Divya Mehra, Roger Sinha, Holly Rodricks



Opening reception for Jayce Salloum & Khadim Ali, دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (the heart that has no love / pain / generosity is not a heart)



Installation view of دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart) at the ROM. Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid

Outreach and member programs ...

“Making a House a Home” – a drawing workshop at the Scarborough Arts Council

30 September, 2009

One Saturday in September, seventeen individuals got together at the Scarborough Arts Council for a collaborative workshop held by SAVAC. Together, they created a series of drawings, which explore and express their memories of “home” - a reference to both one’s own homes and to those homes one may only know through the recollections of others. Using a combination of drawing and storytelling, participants engaged in a thoughtful discussion that investigated the varying understandings of home, and notions of community, place and belonging.

“Making a House a Home” – a drawing exhibition at the Toronto Public Library, Cliffcrest Branch, Scarborough

26 January –20 March, 2010

Selected drawings from the September 2009 workshop were displayed at the Toronto Public Library’s Cliffcrest Branch, in a study and exhibition space programmed by the Scarborough Arts Council. Accompanying the exhibition was a booklet, in which participants had explained their drawings, and their relationships to each other’s work.

“Join the Fray: finding your way into Toronto’s art scene” — a members’ workshop

6 February, 2010

As part of SAVAC’s continued efforts to offer relevant professional development workshops to our members, *Join the Fray* was developed in partnership with Barbara Gilbert. Aimed at newcomer and/or emerging artists, the workshop took an in-depth look at some of the aspects of the Toronto art scene, with an emphasis on aspects that make the Canadian system different from many others, such as grants and artist-run centres.

Outreach and member programs (cont'd ...)

Pictures and Protests: Discussing the Tamil Diaspora Demonstrations

28 March / 10 April / 1 May, 2010

Three artist-led workshops that examined the 2009 Tamil diaspora protests through lectures, discussions and hands-on exercises. Participants examined how these events relate to local ideas of nationalism and multiculturalism, transnational and diaspora political models, and other similar demonstrations in Canada and around the world. With Jayce Salloum and Abbas Akhavan, Nahed Mansour and Meena Murugesan, and Gitanjali Lena and Nilan Perera.

Roundtable discussion at the 2010 Tamil Studies Conference

15 May, 2010

SAVAC's panel at the Tamil Studies Conference included a report on the workshops, presented by Haema Sivanesan and Kohila Kurunathan, the presentation of the Flick group, and the audio recordings from the third workshop, as well as comments from 2 of the workshop participants: Preethy Sivakumar and Netta Kornberg.



(l-r) *Making a House a Home* drawing workshop at Scarborough Arts Council • Exhibition at Toronto Public Library, Cliffcrest Branch



Pictures and Protests: Discussing the Tamil Diaspora Demonstrations, Jayce Salloum & Abbas Akhavan • Nahed Mansour & Meena Murugesan



Pictures and Protests: Discussing the Tamil Diaspora Demonstrations with Gitanjali Lena and Nilan Perera • Roundtable discussion at the Tamil Studies Conference with Preethy Sivakumar, Netta Kornberg, Haema Sivanesan and Kohila Kurunathan

Education report ...

The goal of SAVAC's Education Program was to develop culturally diverse curriculum content drawn from various editions of MONITOR—SAVAC's annual experimental film and video showcase—into GTA high schools.

SAVAC Education Officer, Allan Tong, contacted schools from January–June, 2010. He formed a relationship with the TDSB's Asian Heritage Month organizing committee, headed by Karlo Cabrera, who was working in tandem with the Toronto Catholic District School Board's Jody Huang. This partnership with Asian Heritage Month gave the program much credibility early on in the process.

Allan attended writing sessions with teachers to author lesson plans for films. In May, he previewed one of the lesson plans (*Tapestry* by Sharlene Bamboat) at the TDSB's Asian Heritage Month Symposium at OISE, as well as at South Asian Heritage Month at Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute. At South Asian Heritage Month, Srimoyee Mitra also discussed SAVAC's site specific project, *Big Stories, Little India*. Activities like these generated interest amongst schools to sign on.

In July and August, Etobicoke School of the Arts teacher Kristin Kniehl became involved, providing Allan with feedback and ideas. SAVAC's Film Program received official endorsement from TDSB's Arts Programmer, Christine Jackson in September.

The Film Program will begin to enter schools in spring 2011.

Community partnerships ...

Tamil Canada in the Media Eye: Protests Under Multiculturalism

30 November, 2009

SAVAC presented a short introduction, including calls for photo submissions and participants for the spring workshops, before the panel discussion began. The event examined the media portrayal of the protests.

Hamra Abbas: An Intimate Artist's Talk

19 March, 2010

SAVAC partnered with the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the ROM to present an artist talk by critically acclaimed Pakistani artist Hamra Abbas, whose work *Read*, a multimedia installation was on display at the ROM till the end of March 2010. SAVAC gave away free tickets for the artist's talk to the first 30 members who called us.

Programming report — upcoming programs ...



Monitor 7: New South Asian Short Film & Video 24 March 2011, Innis Town Hall, 7.30pm

Programmed by UK-based Ayesha Hameed, *Monitor 7* promises to be an exciting year once again with films by internationally recognized artists such as Shereen Soliman (Montreal), Karen Mirza/Brad Butler (London, UK) and Vivek Shraya (Toronto).

Gauri Gill: *The Americans* 1 May 2011, Mississauga Central Library

Co-presented with Culture Division, City of Mississauga and Mississauga Central Library, and feature exhibition in the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. In *The Americans*, Gill takes Americans as her subject, but through a new lens of cultural specificity and multiculturalism. Her photographs document the everyday realities of the South Asian community in the United States, revealing the tensions between the optimism of their times and the realities of class, race and cultural difference.

The Annual: Juried Members' Exhibition 9 July – 21 August 2011, Living Arts Centre

SAVAC's annual juried members' exhibition is a platform for emerging and mid-career artists to show their work. We are inviting submissions for 2011. Please visit our website www.savac.net to view the call.

Summary financial statements – 31 August, 2010

| | 2010 | 2009 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| REVENUE | | |
| Grants | \$ 222,400 | \$ 214,706 |
| Private sector | \$ 14,706 | \$ 5,864 |
| Total | \$ 237,106 | \$ 219,928 |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Programs | \$ 149,479 | \$ 123,057 |
| Administration | \$ 90,364 | \$ 76,577 |
| Total | \$ 239,843 | \$ 199,634 |
| Excess of expenses over revenue | \$ (2,737) | |
| Excess of revenue over expenses | | \$ 20,297 |

In our 2010 fiscal year SAVAC received Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) funding to support an additional position of Education Officer. Our grant revenue was slightly higher due to the final payment of the OTF grant. Our private sector revenue also increased owing to donations, co-production revenues, touring fees and book sales.

The increase in revenue resulted in an increase in program expenses over the prior year, and an increase in administrative costs with the expense of an additional salary.

In this fiscal year we are showing an excess of expense over revenue, reflecting an unexpected increase in professional administrative fees.

Overall, SAVAC remains in a stable fiscal position. SAVAC maintains very prudent fiscal management practices as it prepares to transition out of OTF funding.